N.W.T. Plain Talk
On Land and Self-government
August 2002

Salt River First Nation Signs Historic Agreement

Hundreds gathered in Fort Smith to celebrate as Salt River First Nation signed its Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement on June 22nd. The signing ceremony marked the end of almost a decade of negotiations for Salt River First Nation.

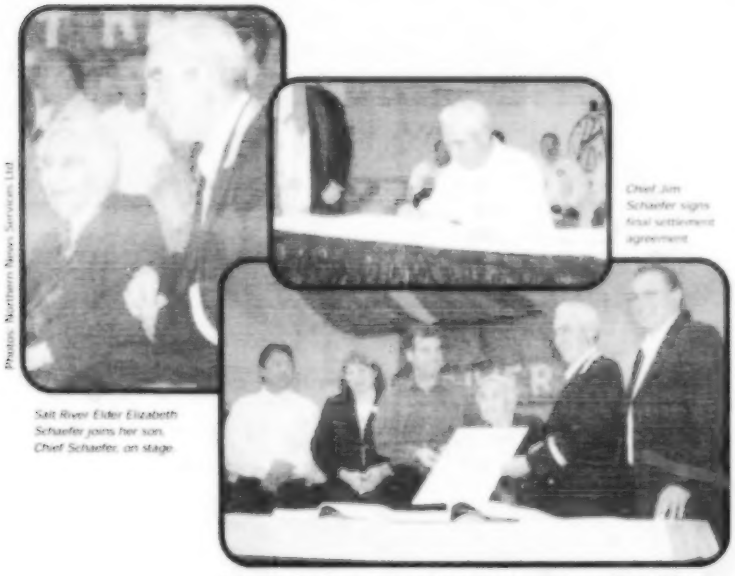
This historic agreement honours a commitment made by Canada more than a century ago in Treaty 8. Under the agreement, Salt River receives more than $83 million and ownership of reserve lands on sites in and around Fort Smith and Wood Buffalo National Park.

To commemorate the occasion, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Robert Nault, presented Chief Jim Schaefer and the band councillors with sterling silver medallions during the ceremony. The medallions were replicas of those presented to Treaty 8 signatories over a century ago.

The signing, speeches, and gift-giving were followed by a huge community feast of buffalo and caribou, and an evening of entertainment and drum dancing.

"Today's settlement sends a clear signal to entrepreneurs and investors, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, that the Salt River First Nation is eager to bolster its economy. I believe we can expect numerous new partnerships to form as a result of this agreement."
- excerpt from speech by DIAND Minister Nault

" We have the land, the financial resources to build a new future, but the future for Salt River as a result of this settlement, will depend on what we make of it. We believe this settlement lays the foundation for a promising future."
- excerpt from speech by Chief Jim Schaefer



Photos: Northern News Services Ltd.

Chief Jim Schaefer signs final settlement agreement

Salt River Elder Elizabeth Schaefer joins her son, Chief Schaefer, on stage

Some of the dignitaries present, from left to right: Premier Stephen Kakfwi, MP Ethel Blondin-Andrew, DIAND Minister Robert Nault, Salt River Elder Elizabeth Schaefer, Salt River Chief Jim Schaefer, and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Jim Antoine.

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The purpose of our newsletter is to keep you informed on the progress of land claim and self-government negotiations in the Northwest Territories, and to provide some answers to frequently asked questions. We also introduce newly appointed negotiators, celebrate milestones, and announce upcoming events. On behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), we hope you will find our claims newsletter informative and easy to read.

South Slave Métis Sign Interim Measures Agreement

"Métis principles and values will now be given due consideration early in the governments' decision-making process for activities proposed in our region."

The South Slave Métis donned their sashes to sign an Interim Measures Agreement with the federal and territorial governments on June 22nd in Fort Smith. The ceremony took place at a luncheon at Roaring Rapids Hall.

Robert Nault, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Jim Antoine, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and Robert Tordiff, President of the South Slave Métis Tribal Council, signed the Interim Measures Agreement on behalf of the Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the South Slave Métis.

The Interim Measures Agreement gives the South Slave Métis an opportunity to voice their views on activities being planned in the geographic area described in the Agreement, while they continue negotiating toward a final agreement. A formalized pre-screening process will be established where the South Slave Métis will review applications for various licences, permits, and dispositions of lands in the geographic area covered by the Agreement. The precise nature of the pre-screening process for each type of application will be outlined in schedules that will be developed over the next few months.

South Slave Métis Tribal Council President, Robert Tordiff sees this agreement as a positive step forward, stating that, "Protection of the land, water and resources that we use to support our way of life has always been of paramount importance to us. Métis principles and values will now be given due consideration early in the governments' decision-making process for activities proposed in our region."

Interim measures are temporary arrangements introduced to afford a measure of protection to Aboriginal interests during the period that an agreement is being negotiated. Temporary arrangements of this kind have to be made within the framework of existing federal and territorial laws.

Photo: Northern News Services Ltd.

South Slave Métis President Robert Tordiff (right) presents Minister Robert Nault with a carving at the luncheon.

Eight communities are involved in the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit (Beaufort-Delta) self-government negotiations. They include the predominantly Gwich'in communities of Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson, the predominantly Inuvialuit communities of Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour and Holman, and the mixed Gwich'in and Inuvialuit communities of Aklavik and Inuvik. Gwich'in / Inuvialuit make up 76% of the total estimated population of approximately 7,100 residents in the Beaufort-Delta region. The communities are located in the Mackenzie Delta near the Beaufort Sea, in the northwestern NWT.

Beaufort-Delta Self-Government AIP Update

The Gwich'in / Inuvialuit self-government negotiations for the Beaufort-Delta region are unique in that they are the first in which an Inuit group and a First Nation group are pursuing self-government together.

In 1993, the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in decided to work together to jointly negotiate regional self-government for the Beaufort-Delta region, signing a Self-Government Negotiations Process and Schedule Agreement in 1996. Negotiations are proceeding on the basis of this agreement and the federal government's Inherent Right of Self-Government Policy (1995), and the Inuvialuit and Gwich'in land claim agreements, signed in 1984 and 1992, respectively.

The Gwich'in and Inuvialuit Self-Government Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) for the Beaufort-Delta region was approved by the Government of Canada in April, 2002. With this approval, the Parties to the negotiations - Canada, the Gwich'in, the Inuvialuit and the Government of the Northwest Territories - began final self-government negotiations.

Next Steps toward Dogrib Final Agreement

Federal, territorial and Dogrib negotiators are continuing their discussions to conclude the Dogrib Agreement. The major issues in the Dogrib Agreement have generally been resolved and the target date for the three chief negotiators to initial the Agreement is September 2002.

Once initialed, the Dogrib Agreement will have to be ratified – or approved – by all three Parties. An Eligibility Committee has been formed to begin the work needed to prepare for the Agreement's approval and eventual coming into effect.

One of the first tasks of the Eligibility Committee will be to provide information on eligibility to be enrolled as a Dogrib citizen. This criteria – defining "who is a Dogrib" – will be set out in the Dogrib Agreement, once it has been initialed.

As the first step in the ratification process, Dogrib citizens will be asked to vote on the Dogrib Agreement after it is approved by the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council. Prior to the vote, the Eligibility Committee will publish an Official Voters' List comprised of Dogrib citizens who have applied and been accepted as eligible voters. The Committee will also coordinate the voting process.

The Dogrib Agreement will only be signed once the ratification process has been successfully completed. First, the Dogrib have to vote and support the Agreement. Next, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) will have to ratify the Agreement through its Cabinet. Finally, the Government of Canada will have to ratify the Agreement through its federal Cabinet.

The Dogrib Agreement will be the first to include self-government as part of land claim negotiations north of 60. Subsequent to ratification, the Dogrib will receive approximately 39,000 square kilometres of land, in a single block located near the four Dogrib communities of Behcho Ko (Rae-Edzo), Wha Ti (Lac la Martre), Gameti (Rae Lakes) and Wekweti (Snare Lake). These Dogrib lands will include both the surface and subsurface resources. The Dogrib will also receive a tax-free payment, paid over a number of years, and a share of resource royalties from development in the Mackenzie Valley.

Under the Agreement's self-government provisions, a Dogrib First Nation Government will be able to make laws over a wide range of areas, primarily over Dogrib lands and Dogrib citizens. Key services such as health care, education, and other social programs and services will be delivered to all residents in each of the four Dogrib communities through an Intergovernmental Services Agreement with the GNWT.

Photo courtesy of Gary Black

From left to right are: GNWT Chief Negotiator, Gary Black, Chief Federal Negotiator, Jean-Yves Assiniwi, and Dogrib Negotiator, John B. Zoe.

Chronology of the Dogrib Treaty 11 Negotiations

1992 - November	Dogrib Treaty 11 comprehensive land claim is accepted for negotiation.
1994 - January	Negotiations begin.
1995 - August	The federal Inherent Right of Self-Government Policy is released, paving the way for self-government negotiations.
1997 - April	Canada approves a mandate to negotiate a Dogrib land claims and self-government agreement (Dogrib Agreement) with the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council.
1999 - August	The Dogrib Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) is initialed by chief negotiators.
2000 - January	The Dogrib AIP is signed in Rae.

Since April, four Main Table negotiation sessions have been held, including a session in Tuktoyaktuk, in July. The next negotiating session is scheduled in the region for the week of August 12 - 16. Most of the negotiation sessions are held in communities of the Beaufort-Delta region.

All Parties were anticipating signing the AIP in June. However, the chiefs of the Gwich'in Bands asked Canada for additional information on the subject of transition of the Gwich'in Bands under a self-government agreement. All Parties to the self-government negotiations will be meeting with the Gwich'in chiefs on this subject in the coming months.

The Parties are hopeful that a signing ceremony for the AIP will take place in the Beaufort-Delta region in the fall.

Chief Federal Negotiator Daniel Charbonneau listens to Chief Beaufort Delta Negotiator Bob Simpson during meetings.

Photo: Susan Beaumont/DIAND

Devolution Update

During his recent visit to Yellowknife, Minister Nault met with other leaders of the Intergovernmental Forum representing the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the Aboriginal Summit, and confirmed that Canada has approved a mandate to begin negotiating the transfer of administration and control of lands and onshore resources in the Northwest Territories.

Minister Nault also assured everyone that he is planning to make a formal announcement on the appointment of a federal negotiator in the near future, once arrangements have been finalized with the candidate he has in mind.

During the meeting, Minister Nault confirmed his commitment to this process, reiterating that "The time is right for devolution to take place. We have, in the Intergovernmental Forum, a group of forward-thinking leaders who are prepared to grasp the opportunity which now presents itself. It's time to get on with this unfinished business."

The Aboriginal Summit has named Bob Simpson as their Interim Negotiator, while the GNWT has named Dr. Hal Gerein as their Chief Territorial Negotiator.

"The time is right for devolution to take place. We have, in the Intergovernmental Forum, a group of forward-thinking leaders who are prepared to grasp the opportunity which now presents itself. It's time to get on with this unfinished business."

The next Intergovernmental Forum is tentatively scheduled for the fall.

Q. What is a Treaty Land Entitlement Claim?

A. Treaty land entitlement claims arise when a First Nation asserts that the Government of Canada did not provide the reserve land promised under a treaty. Some First Nations have not received any of the reserve land they were promised; others have not received the correct amount of land. For instance, Salt River First Nation's Final Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement fulfills outstanding land provisions in Treaty 8, which was signed over 100 years ago.

A.

Do you have a question about land or self-government negotiations in the NWT? We'd be happy to provide an answer. Contact us at the address listed below.

On the web

Visit the following for more information:

Government of Canada programs and services:
Government of Canada home page:
www.gc.ca

Plain Talk on the web:
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada site:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nt/pt/index_e.html

Various claims agreements:
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada site:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/agr/index_e.html

OUR Vision

The NWT region of DIAND is a respected partner in a strong and healthy Northwest Territories. We strive for:

- respectful, effective relationships with Aboriginal peoples;
- creating and enhancing opportunities for all northerners;
- responsible resource development in healthy ecosystems;
- northern control over northern resources;
- responsive and accountable northern governments as partners; and
- national initiatives that reflect the interests of all Northerners.

Plain Talk is produced to provide general information on topics related to land claims and self-government. It is not a legal document.

We welcome your input!
Please Direct questions or comments to:

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Plain Talk on Land and Self-government is produced by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the NWT to help northerners understand these concepts, how they work, and what they mean in our day-to-day lives.